



## State Representative Ed Murray

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# Legislature 2000



## Report to the 43rd District

Spring 2000

*Dear Neighbor:*

*As you know, the Legislature faced a daunting challenge responding to Initiative 695 and a \$1.1 billion cut in state revenues this biennium. An overwhelming majority of voters in the 43rd District opposed the measure because it would reduce funding for essential state services, health care, and transportation.*

*In March, a King County Superior Court ruling declared the measure unconstitutional. Though a final decision will be made by the state Supreme Court this summer, the Legislature responded to that decision by passing a \$30 car-tab fee bill. That left us with less money to do our job meeting crucial state needs.*

*As I write this newsletter, we are working hard on passing capital, operating, and transportation budgets to continue the progress made last year. When a final spending plan passes the Legislature, you may e-mail me at [murray\\_ed@leg.wa.gov](mailto:murray_ed@leg.wa.gov) for details, or call the hotline at 800-562-6000. You may also find details at this web page when the information becomes available: [www.leg.wa.gov/house/opr/app/operrpt.htm](http://www.leg.wa.gov/house/opr/app/operrpt.htm).*

*Overall, your Legislature accomplished more than anyone would have expected, given the historic 49-49 tie in the House of Representatives and the revenue losses following I-695.*

*For now, I would like to take a few moments to share with you our strong accomplishments over the last two years helping families, supporting education, assisting workers and businesses, protecting our environment, providing housing assistance, and implementing health reforms that help all residents.*

*I encourage you to stay in touch with me at my district office. I will be working this spring, summer, and fall on issues that matter to you and our state. Thank you again for letting me serve you in your state Legislature.*

*Sincerely,*  
Ed Murray

State Representative  
43<sup>rd</sup> Legislative District



# Representative Ed Murray

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## Responsive, responsible government:



- The Legislature passed a balanced \$20.6 billion two-year operating budget in 1999 that fulfills the state's responsibilities to its citizens.
- We did this **without raising new taxes** and holding growth in government spending to its lowest margin in more than two decades.
- We kept strong education funding as our No. 1 budget priority.
- In response to Initiative 695, which cut \$1.1 billion in state revenues, we **will maintain critical funding for programs**: criminal justice, public health, mass transit, ferries, air quality, and roads.
- In our proposed 2000 supplemental budget, lawmakers will use some of the \$1.3 billion in the state surplus rather than slashing services.

## Transportation funding challenges:



- In response to I-695 budget cuts this session, the bipartisan House budget proposed short-term funding to support Metro and ferries until we find a long-term funding solution:
  - \$80 million for Metro and other transit districts.
  - \$20 million for ferries.
- We proposed \$20 million for Sound Transit, to extend the planned light rail line from the University District to Northgate.
- We proposed a short-term solution to fund key transit, alternative transportation, and road projects so we don't lose any matching funds from federal or private sources.

## Education: Our top priority:



- To correct lagging salaries, I voted in 1999 for a budget that gave **pay increases for teachers**: 15.4 percent for beginning teachers, 7.9 percent for mid-career teachers, and 10 percent for veteran teachers.
- We passed the bipartisan **Education Accountability Act** (SB 5418), to assist students and schools who need help meeting our tough new academic standards, while holding schools and school districts accountable.



- We added money for the **Reading Corps**, expanded learning assistance, and better math training for teachers.
- We passed a **teachers standards** measure (HB 2760) that will improve our schools by requiring teachers to demonstrate mastery of subjects they teach before they enter a classroom.

*Rep. Ed Murray, Democratic Chair of the House Capital Budget Committee, presides over a committee hearing in Olympia.*

## Education (cont'd):



- I proposed the **Safe Schools Act** (HB 1765) both sessions, and despite 65 sponsors, this proposal did not receive a House vote. It would have required school officials to develop malicious harassment policies to prevent the abuse of students by their peers.
- We funded **Promise Scholarships** to help up to more than 4,000 high-achieving students from low- and middle-income families go to college.
- I voted for a two-year budget that **boosts higher education enrollment**, creating 8,300 new slots at the state's universities and community colleges.

## Building schools and colleges:



- As co-chair of the House Capital Budget Committee, I am proud to report the committee's \$2.3 billion two-year spending plan approved by the Legislature last year invests heavily in school building projects. The winners are kids who need more classrooms and college students who deserve better facilities. We put:
  - \$326 million for **public school construction** to create badly needed classroom space; and
  - \$229 million to renovate and restore **community and technical college buildings**.
- This year we also proposed moving \$100 million in excess revenues from our healthy reserves to the School Construction Fund to help reduce overcrowded classrooms and fund school construction projects, while also lowering local property taxes and boosting state support to these efforts.

## Housing solutions:



- The approved capital budget I supported, as chair of the Capital Budget Committee, puts **\$80 million into low-income housing** projects statewide, including nearly \$62 million to the **Housing Trust Fund**, which helps develop affordable housing, and \$8 million to address a critical shortage of **farm worker housing**.
- I backed legislation we passed (HB 1345) that exempts low-income housing, funded through the state's Housing Trust Fund, from property taxes.

## Protecting our environment:



- In response to salmon species listed as threatened and endangered in most of Washington, I backed our **salmon recovery efforts** that began in 1999 under a comprehensive plan that works to protect critical habitat and water supplies and addresses other crucial needs from fishing-license buybacks to scientific monitoring.
- **Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program**, which acquires and develops parks and wildlife habitat, received \$48 million under the approved two-year capital budget.
- **State parks** received \$28 million for improvements in the two-year capital budget.
- To protect shorelines, we considered measures to update shoreline management plans, improve the agency overseeing the shoreline-guideline process, and put that process more in line with our state's salmon-recovery efforts.
- To keep our air clean, we proposed funding for crucial **air-quality programs** that could have lost funding in the wake of I-695, which benefits public health and preserves vital federal highway funding.
- I voted against legislation allowing hound hunting of problem cougars (SB 5001), which repeals parts of a strongly supported 1996 statewide initiative banning bear baiting and the hunting of cougars with hounds.

# Report to the 43rd District

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## Health care:



- We passed a **Patients' Bill of Rights** this year — legislation I introduced the previous session — that puts your rights into law to protect your privacy and hold insurers accountable. The measure guarantees residents the right to choose their own family doctor and specialist if needed, the right to appeal if care is denied, and the right to justice if they are wrongly denied health care by insurers.
- We passed the **Children's Health Insurance Program** (SB 5416), or **CHIP**, which will **provide health insurance for up to 10,000 Washington kids** whose working parents aren't covered by an employer health plan, but make too much to qualify for Medicaid and can't afford private insurance. No new taxes will be levied; tobacco settlement money will fund it, with matching federal grants.
- The **Basic Health Plan** received \$16 million in new funding in the 1999-'01 budget, increasing support for low-income families to provide health insurance for 6,000 more enrollees.
- Though I supported Democratic efforts to get private health insurers back in the individual market, I opposed this legislation (SB 6067) because of its provision for a nine-month waiting period for pre-existing conditions. For more details, call the state Insurance Commissioner 800-562-6900, or visit its web page at: [www.insurance.wa.gov/](http://www.insurance.wa.gov/).

## Jobs:



- We passed the Worker Retraining and Tax Fairness Act (HB 3077), which will provide training benefits for nearly 20,000 laid off workers over the next six years so they can prepare for good-paying jobs and save businesses \$580 million in unemployment insurance taxes, helping countless small employers.
- We gave a 3 percent pay raise for 1999 and 2000 to public employees.
- I will continue working to **extend state employees' benefits to their domestic partners**. Both sessions, my legislation enabling this (HB 2037) failed to overcome political opposition.
- I proposed extending state's leave policies for classified employees (HB 2038), so they can receive bereavement time or time off caring for domestic partners.

**Representative Ed Murray**

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**Report to the 43rd District**

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